

VZCZCXYZ0490
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSG #0200/01 0631851
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 041851Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4564
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 3821
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2323
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 1334
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0729
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1971
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 6019
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4270
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2199
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 000200

SIPDIS

STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [EFIN](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT - MARCH 4

Leading Stories

1. The opposition in Peru claims the FTA signed by that country and Chile is unconstitutional because it was not approved by Congress. Several Deans criticize private universities that issue law degrees after just three years.

U.S.-Related News

2. Interview with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, headlined, "We must Pay Close Attention to our Relations with Russia"
Subheadline: Admiral Mullen not concerned with Moscow's military influence in South America.

3. Reasons for his visit: "It's very important for the U.S. military to be committed with South American countries, which is a crucial region. In Chile's case, we want to strengthen a very strong relationship. We need partners and Chile occupies a very important position of leadership in South America."

4. On Raul Castro's decision to remove several government officials, Mullen said, "He (Raul Castro) is the leader of a country and he must do what he believes is most appropriate."

5. Russia: "One of our biggest challenges is in regard to future commitments with Russia. Last year, I spoke to my Russian counterpart about the Russian ships going to Venezuela. The U.S. Navy does that all the time (naval exercises), so it is fine by me if its ships are cooperating with Venezuela.... I am paying close attention to our relations with Russia and also China, which is signing agreements worldwide. We will support those commitments that are positive improvements."

6. On the South American Defense Council and chances that Chavez might use it to expand his influence, Mullen said: "The view of the Council is something that concerns its members. I do believe that a regional approach is very important.... It's up to its leaders, including Mr. Chavez, to see how it will deal with the region's challenges. I only hope that the council is seen as a very positive influence in the region" (El Mercurio, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, circ. 129,000, 3/4).

7. In a column, the Director of the national prison guard system (Gendarmeria) Alejandro Jimenez rebuts the Department of State Human Rights report's observations on the state of prisons in Chile: "We

never received from the U.S. authorities a request for information or a visit to penal facilities. Had that been the case, we would have responded positively. A report based on second-hand information is not too thorough (La Tercera, conservative, independent, circ. 101,000, 3/4)."

¶18. 73-year old Linda Hall Brodie died from a heart attack while on the cruise ship Carnival Splendor. She will be repatriated to the United States from Valparaiso (El Mercurio, 3/4).

Cuba

¶19. Cuba's new Ambassador to Chile, Ileana Diaz Arguelles, presented her credentials to President Bachelet. Foreign Affairs Minister Foxley said this shows that the GOC "will work with all countries in the region so long as there is respect for diversity and relations are not stated in terms of struggle or an ideological confrontation" (La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent, circ. 4,200, 3/4).

¶10. The international media interpreted Raul Castro's removal of the Ministers of Economy and Foreign Affairs as a "gesture" of rapprochement with the new U.S. administration. Reportedly, Cuban Justice Minister Mara Ester Reus will express this willingness, by stating before the Human Rights Council in Geneva, that her country has "considerable expectations" with regard to the Obama administration (La Segunda, conservative, afternoon, circ. 33,000, 3/3).

Chilean Students Murdered in Florida

¶11. Foreign Minister Foxley noted the cooperation of U.S. authorities in the repatriation of the bodies of the two Chilean victims. He said the ministry will assign an attorney to oversee the proceedings against the murderer in the United States (La Nacion, 3/4).

SIMONS